Statement of Significance

The Seaboard Air Line Railway depot in Patrick, South Carolina, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its significance as a structure associated with the railroad transportation industry, and Criterion C, as an outstanding example of the small-town railroad station building type. The depot is locally significant for its key role in the history of Patrick and the surrounding area during the early twentieth century. Built sometime in the last half of 1900 or the early months of 1901, the depot was literally the cornerstone of Patrick, one of several flagstop towns that developed along the Seaboard line between Columbia and Cheraw immediately after it entered use in the summer of 1900. The development of the town exemplified the process by which railroads penetrated the Sandhills region of the southern United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century, reshaping a landscape that had long been predominantly rural, sparsely populated, and generally isolated. In addition, the depot is an excellent example of a small-town railroad station, a specific building type that became commonplace across the nation as the railroad industry reached its peak in the decades between roughly 1880 and 1930. The depot retains its historic appearance and has undergone no significant alterations since its construction.

Most residents of the southern Sandhills -- the narrow strip of sandy, rolling terrain running from southern Virginia to eastern Texas that separates the piedmont from the coastal plain -- found themselves watching from afar as the railroad emerged as the leading force in the transportation revolution of the nineteenth century. Early in the antebellum period, Tidewater planters, recognizing that the sandy, arid soil was too infertile to support staple crops, had left the region to become the domain of indigent herdsmen and subsistence farmers. In the 1830s and 1840s, the builders of the South's first railroads found different but equally valid reasons to avoid the Sandhills. The undulating terrain made railroad construction prohibitively expensive and in many cases challenged existing engineering technology. As a result, early southern railroads steered clear of the region as much as possible; lines built during the antebellum period typically rain inland from coastal ports and,